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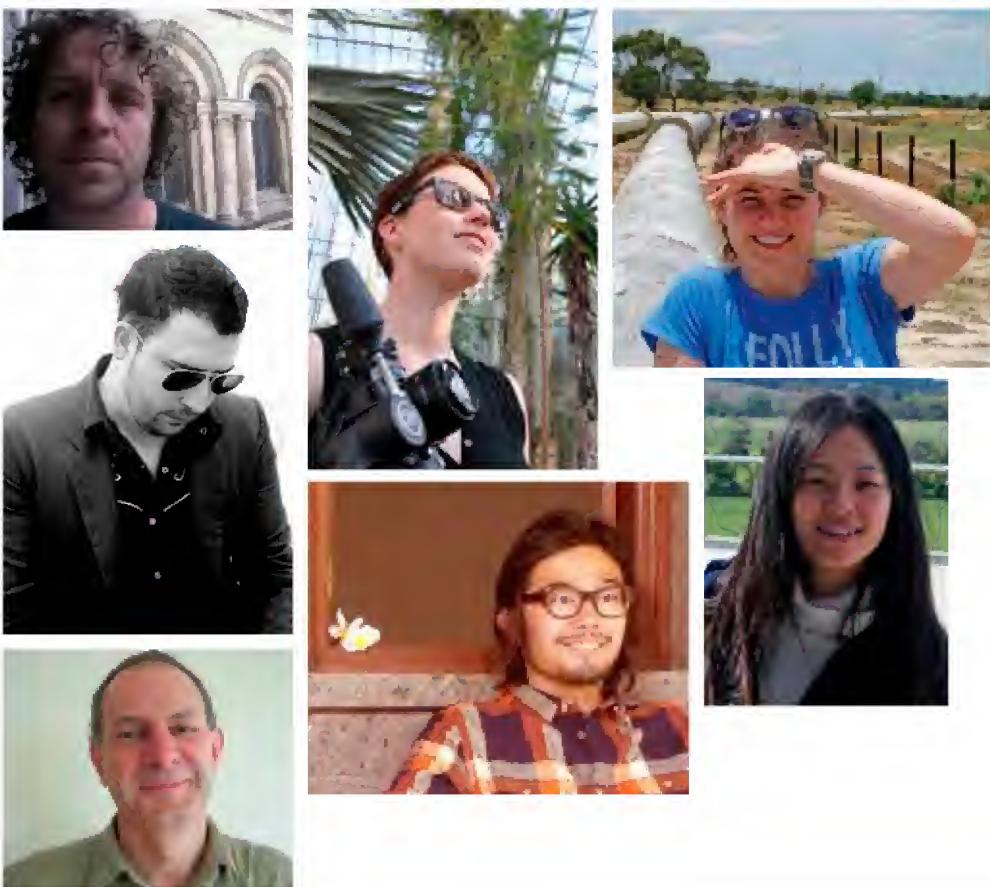
*Young and emerging writers  
Voicing the past  
Embracing the future*



**Cover:** Many domestic gardens in Australia's arid and semi-arid regions have traditionally enjoyed the 'little splash of colour' in spite of low water availability and harsh climates—Ruth Morgan reflects on water availability and our designed landscapes in this issue (see page 4).

Photo: Richard Aitken

**Right:** Contributors to this issue (clockwise from top left) are: Dominic Redfern, Jessica Hood, Ruth Morgan, Yan Zhao, Akihito Hatayama, Dimitri Serghis, and Henry Skerritt.



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# Honouring Nina Crone

Christina Dyson &  
Richard Aitken

This issue honours the memory of our predecessor as editor of *Australian Garden History*, Nina Crone OAM (1934–2007). Nina's working life was spent in education and the Australian Garden History Society was fortunate that she was able to continue and extend this vocation through her editorship. Her passion for words and ideas, gardens and landscapes was never far from the surface as she brought to light new research on Australian garden history in this journal during 2001–06. Following her death, many AGHS members and friends joined to celebrate Nina's life and work, resulting in the establishment of the Nina Crone Fund. This fund is being used to support young and emerging writers in the field of Australian garden history through diverse forms of assistance. This issue features several contributions facilitated by two of those tangible means of support—the Nina Crone Award and the Nina Crone editorial mentoring programme. We look forward to many more such contributions enlivening the pages of *Australian Garden History*.

The issue—with its fresh, untrammelled voices—also marks a decade since publication of *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* (2002). That book too drew many untested voices together, alongside the more familiar. Not only did the *Companion* summarise the existing state of scholarship, it simultaneously and subtly sketched new ground to be covered. What then have been some of the preoccupations of garden historians over that decade?

Increasingly, as historians, we have begun to value the representative, the typical, and the recent past alongside the exceptional, the extraordinary, and the antique—the commonplace has as much to tell of our shared human experience as the isolated masterpiece. In this we are also listening more to marginalised voices, those who peopled gardens as workers, users, and admirers, rather than focusing on privilege conferred by creation or ownership. We now mine the archive for first-hand descriptions, candid thoughts, and ephemeral moments rather than emphasising official accounts and received wisdom. Social value to current generations is given increased weighting alongside historic and aesthetic significance. The research value of gardens and landscapes is increasingly being heeded. Indeed, we continue to look over the garden fence, regarding the vista beyond as of equal significance to the view contained—context as well as content. Above all we are seeking relevance for personal experiences as our pluralised society haltingly moves towards respect for diversity and individuality. None of this is entirely new to scholars but such sentiments certainly characterise our contributors to this issue.

Many thinkers now talk of ‘research ecosystems’, denoting the inter-connectedness of research—not merely across the boundaries of adjoining disciplines, but embracing vibrant communities of thought from the merging of many disciplines, each pulling and pushing, changing and transforming as though governed by some vital internal life force. Garden history needs this vibrancy, this transformative urge—as garden historians we cannot stand still or we risk breathing dust. The melding of emerging voices with those more established signifies our enthusiasm to share the stage with a new generation. We hope readers are excited about these recent directions in garden history. Inspired by the memory of Nina Crone and her passion for education we can perpetuate the role of the AGHS as a vital and vibrant group. We need to listen to young and emerging voices: quite simply, they are our future.

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Ruth Morgan

## Water dreaming

Bruce Rock stands over the Western Australian wheatbelt town that bears its name. Utilised by Aboriginal people and European settlers alike, rains pool in shallow depressions in the rock face and cascade over the rock into soaks at its base.

The nexus between water availability, garden design, and politics has never been far from the surface in Australia and shows every promise of remaining closely linked for many years to come.

As the summer months approached in late 2011, some state governments announced that water restrictions would be relaxed. I suspect many Australians breathed a sigh of relief. But I couldn't help wonder why these governments

bothered. Surely it would be better to encourage frugality than profligacy? As I have never known a time without the cry of drought, I find the whole idea of water restrictions a fact of life—a normal feature of the Australian suburbs. For many others, however, they are quite the opposite—unwelcome interruptions to the daily routine. Although drought, scarcity, and restrictions have never been far from the headlines during my adult life, others might recall very different conditions. And, as a result, I suspect their gardens differ significantly to mine. After all, the ebb and flow



Prince's Square, Launceston, showing the magnificent central fountain which from the 1850s proudly proclaimed the city's reticulated water supply.

Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (1983:P:1080)

of water in the nation's towns and suburbs has influenced Australian garden design since the earliest days of colonisation.

Water has played a vital role in the European colonisation of Australia. Most, if not all, of the colonies were founded near rivers and springs to guarantee their colonists could access water supplies. Water fountains in prominent locations in the colonies were often erected as monuments to colonial civility and progress. Although their spouts inferred that water was easily accessible and reliable, such conditions were a far cry from the experiences of most colonists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Water was a scarce commodity in colonial Australia. Unless you could harvest it yourself, you had to collect it and pay for it at public standpipes and from water carters. Under such circumstances, cultivating a sophisticated garden was an especially privileged activity as it meant you could afford to use water beyond your household's health and sanitary needs. Even when water began to be piped to the suburbs, there was usually not enough to spare for the garden. Such was the rudimentary nature of these reticulated supplies that there were regular shortages of water, much to the dissatisfaction of all concerned. At the height of the 1897 'Water Famine' in Perth for instance, women had to trudge through sand to collect a little water for their families, while in a particularly desperate episode, some thirsty residents stoned a local water carter because he did not have enough supplies for all of them.

Some have seen the continent's lack of water as a challenge to be overcome by the application of engineering ingenuity. Theirs has been a vision of making the deserts bloom. The efforts of the Chaffey brothers to develop an irrigation scheme on the Murray River in the late nineteenth century marked the beginnings of a new spirit of nation-building endeavours that focussed on the development of the continent's water resources. 'Let others make the songs of love, for our young struggling nation; but I will sing while e'er I live, the Songs of Irrigation', declared Henry Lawson in the *Amateur Gardener*, 'For while the white man shall beget the white man's son and daughter, the two most precious things for us, shall still be wheat and water'. In 2009, I visited Mildura and saw for myself how the drought was eating away at the Chaffeys' town as irrigators struggled to cope with smaller water allocations. Its palm-lined streets recalled those bygone days when both river and wealth flowed more freely. Likewise, the



traces of Walter Burley Griffin's grand plans for the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area can be found in his Art Deco water towers at Leeton and the circular design of Griffith.

In Western Australia, another visionary is afforded a similar reverence. The year 2012 marks the 110th anniversary of the death of Charles Yelverton O'Connor, the doomed engineer who piped water uphill over five hundred kilometres from Mundaring Weir to the eastern goldfields of Kalgoorlie at the turn of the twentieth century. Cultivating gardens in those semi-arid parts was no easy task. One newspaper correspondent observed 'the pathos of the carrot-top in its saucer of water upon the window-sill, and the basin with the tender shoots of wheat, which an uncontrollable craving has caused one to grow in water'. Soon after the pipeline's arrival, the parks and gardens of the goldfields were transformed into green desert oases. But in some cases, old habits died hard. My grandfather, who was born and raised in Kalgoorlie over a decade after the

Water came late to many Western Australian wheatbelt towns, like Bruce Rock, via branches of the Comprehensive Water Supply Scheme, an availability which encouraged a new interest in floriculture.

Photographs taken by J. K. Ewers, c.1959; reproduced by permission of his literary executor; Trisha Kotai-Ewers.

pipe's completion, always remembered the worth of water, even when watering his patch of couch grass in the Perth suburbs some fifty years later.

Visionaries like the Chaffeys and O'Connor inspired another generation of water dreamers in the 1930s and 1940s. Proponents of the Bradfield Scheme argued that Queensland's fast-flowing northern rivers should be turned inland to irrigate the dry heart of the continent. Running as they were into the sea was simply a waste of precious water. Although this particular vision was not realised, others were developed after the Second World War, such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme in the Australian Alps, the Comprehensive Water Supply Scheme in the Western Australian wheatbelt, and the Ord River Scheme in the nation's northwest. These projects represented both the peak and decline of such grand pipedreams as budgets tightened and their ecological costs became apparent. As the recent drought revealed, however, such pipedreams continue to captivate the nation.

Visionary schemes of water supply were by no means confined to the late nineteenth century. In the 1970s, Western Australian scientists considered the possibility of towing Antarctic icebergs to moor near Fremantle, where they would be tapped for water supplies. As I read through the folders of archived correspondence

and newspaper clippings at the National Archives, it struck me that no one seemed to note the irony inherent in taking water from one desert to another. Another grand plan was to pipe water over two thousand kilometres from the Fitzroy River in the state's northwest to Perth and Kalgoorlie. But the realisation of these dreams was beyond the will and budget of the state government, which was committed to the prospect of northern development. Instead, the extensive groundwater resources beneath the Swan Coastal Plain were a far more affordable and politically palatable option.

These water dreams had emerged in response to growing pressures on Perth's water supplies during the dry 1970s. By the end of the decade, the combination of poor rains and thirsty consumers had led the local water authority to impose tight water restrictions and a 'user pays' rating to temper what seemed to be an insatiable demand for water. The reticulation of the suburbs and the growing affluence of Perth's population in the post-war years had combined to naturalise the seemingly unlimited availability of water for homes and gardens. Water had become a right, not a privilege, and it was splashed around accordingly. Having become so accustomed to unfettered water supplies, many Perth residents saw constraints on their water use as an affront to

Western Australia's goldfields water supply pipeline feeds not only

Kalgoorlie, but also wheatbelt towns such as Merredin, where it snakes through wheat paddocks, salt lakes, and roadside reserves.



civilised society. The local gardening community was especially indignant at such measures, as they felt they had some kind of moral right to water because their gardening efforts beautified the suburban streets of Perth.

But theirs was not a new cry. As early as 1905, the introduction of hosepipe restrictions in Sydney had ruffled the feathers of local gardeners. ‘What sort of people are these Water Board officials to imagine they will check the “waste” by a prohibition of this sort?’ cried the *Amateur Gardener*, ‘A man or woman who wants to water his or her garden will not be beaten by such a notice’. Owing to the differences between each water supply board, it is difficult to discern with any exactitude the timing and frequency of water restrictions across the nation. What is clear, however, is that they were a regular occurrence throughout the twentieth century. Realists among the gardening fraternity took these episodes as warning signs. They made efforts to design gardens that acknowledged the natural scarcity of water in southern Australia. For these gardeners, the inclusion of Australian plants in gardens was not simply an expression of nationalism or an appreciation of their aesthetic appeal: growing Australian plants was instead a pragmatic exercise. In many places, these local plants were complemented by the introduction of

plants from comparable Mediterranean climates. In Perth, these preferences were also influenced by the recent arrival there of Dr John S. Beard from South Africa, who established the Botanic Garden at King’s Park in the early 1960s.

The frequency of water restrictions over the past century has led me to wonder why so many Australian gardeners still consider them a challenge to be grappled with. Why haven’t they become a fact of life and been dealt with accordingly? Perhaps it is because restrictions, until recently, have been temporary—once the rains return, hosepipes and sprinklers



have in the past been rolled out again until the next inconvenient episode. Have gardeners been wishful thinkers, hoping against hope that restrictions won’t return? In some cases, I wonder whether the traditional tendencies among gardeners have slowed innovations and adaptations to the vagaries of the Australian climate in suburban gardens. Yet many more gardeners have been model examples of conservative water use, carefully tending to the needs of their plants with the most modest quantities of water. In this case it seems, one size does not fit all.

On my visit to some of the towns in the Murray-Darling Basin in 2009, the stories I heard and the scenes I saw brought home to me the severity of the problems facing the region. My colleagues and I wondered aloud whether this was just another drought or something much greater, the symptoms of a changing climate. The following year was the driest year on record for the farming areas of Western Australia, a region that scientists have already flagged as the national canary in the climate change coal mine. Australians are no strangers to lean years but they never seem to get easier and we seem to forget them when they eventually pass. Politics aside, the issues of drought and/or climate change are ones that will occupy gardeners for years to come, and if they aren’t already, they should be. Although water restrictions have been eased, history suggests they will be back. We can’t afford to be complacent. Are we missing a golden opportunity to recalibrate the scale?

Few people in Perth took the prospect of utilising icebergs for water supplies very seriously in the 1970s, although this cartoon was dutifully clipped and filed by a diligent researcher from the CSIRO.

National Archives of Australia (Perth), courtesy of Community Newspaper Group

Ruth Morgan is a Perth-based environmental historian who is currently completing her doctoral studies at the University of Western Australia. Preparation of this article has been facilitated by the editorial mentoring programme of the Nina Crone Fund.



Henry Skerritt

## *Engaging with the colonial landscape*

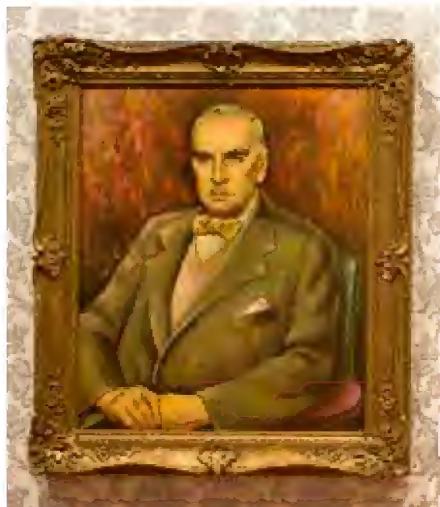
Podcasts within the Experimental Gentlemen exhibition provided a soundtrack, extending and enhancing the visitor experience.

In the recent exhibition Experimental Gentlemen, drawn from the Grimwade collection of The Ian Potter Museum of Art at The University of Melbourne, curator Henry Skerritt questioned the relevance of colonial society for a contemporary audience.

'In no other country... does the responsibility of preserving a knowledge of the past rest quite so heavily on its people' wrote Russell Grimwade in his forward to R.T.M. Pescott's 1954 history of the National Museum of Victoria. For Grimwade, understanding history was inextricably linked with understanding himself as part of Australia's pioneer heritage. He saw his father, Frederick Sheppard Grimwade, and his father's business partner Alfred Felton, as great pioneers in the same tradition as the Macarthurs, the Batmans, the Phillips, and Cook. So for him history was about creating a continuous line of pioneers,

and in a sense setting that up against the bushy Heidelberg School world of Australian nationalism that was about swagmen and bushrangers, which he didn't see as the foundation of Australia. Grimwade saw the foundation of Australia as a genteel history, of hard-working pastoralists and industrial capitalists. In a sense that explains the fairly genteel nature of his collecting but it also explains why he was interested in so many things. He saw himself as part of that tradition of Renaissance men interested in science and art, and so for him this was the passion that drove him to write *An Anthography of the Eucalypts* (1920) and to collect all those eucalypts. At his Toorak house Miegunnyah he had quite a remarkable garden made up almost entirely of native plants and I think that's been, for me, the key—the experimental gentleman was the key in tying Grimwade to his collections.

Curating Experimental Gentlemen was a terrific gig. There are some people who compartmentalise



their life—they have their day-to-day work, their private life, and their career, but I've never been able to do that. My attitude has always been that if you're thinking about something it's going to infuse all of the other things. So, for me, I've finished my Masters degree and that was really about conceptualising Australia in an international sense—I was writing on abstract artists from the 1960s. And when you do that, I don't think you can go and play in a band and write songs, and not be really consciously thinking about, say, the fact that these abstract painters were painting in a style of art that is associated very much with New York and American abstraction. Rock and Roll music is exactly the same—I would have real trouble playing without thinking about how that translates to wider issues.

My band The Holy Sea has made two recordings in the last few years. The first one was very personal, really an autobiographical one. It was an attempt to think about place but in a very personal-focused way. You can't make too many of those records because they can be quite painful experiences, and mining the personal is something that has a finite life span I think. In the second my band and I were consciously looking for something intrinsically personal and quite located, but not autobiographical. So the historical thing seemed like a really obvious step to us.

Our last recording *Ghosts of the Horizon* (2010) therefore was all historically themed—it opens with a song about James Cook and it moves through Arthur Phillip, and it's got one on Cameron Doomadgee, but all in the first person. The idea was really about locating the historical experience and personalising it. That was exactly the idea behind my curation of Experimental Gentlemen.

I was faced with a collection that has been shown repeatedly and often with the attitude that 'well,

you know, it belongs to a different time and that Russell Grimwade was this quirky old boffin who collected all of this stuff'. For me, however, the real challenge was how do you make that relevant, how do you make that interesting, make people realise that there is a continuity, particularly in a place like The Ian Potter Museum of Art at The University of Melbourne where much of the excitement around the exhibition programme is driven by contemporary shows. You know, how you say, 'wait a tick, the old stuff we've got is really exciting'. It's a challenge.

In my Masters thesis I looked for an Australian-ness to the landscape dimension of the abstract art under consideration, but I found the opposite—people very consciously setting themselves against that. In an odd way, though, I think that's quite an Australian thing. For all the moments in which Australian art has defined itself by the landscape, there's an equal number, particularly in the colonial era, where people are defining themselves against the landscape. So if you look at those early township views which I included in Experimental Gentlemen, they are not views so much of landscape as looking over the landscape.

I was thinking about that in terms of gardens because if you look, say, at those early Sydney views of the 1800s to 1820s, in each of them the garden appears. It's that key indicator of civilisation and in Taylor's 1823 panorama in particular, the garden and attendant houses are set up against the wilderness—that idea of the landscape as inherently Australian doesn't really come until the Heidelberg School of painters and then the suburban artists painting from their backyards.

Major James Taylor was a military man, a surveyor, and his three-part panorama of Sydney was produced in 1823, very much as

Russell Grimwade's portrait juxtaposed with his cabinet of eucalypt fruit (right) and his photograph (centre) of *Eucalyptus torquata* (Coolgardie White Gum or Goldfields Red-flowering Gum) from *An Anthography of the Eucalypts* (2nd ed., 1930).



Three-part panorama  
of Sydney's  
Port Jackson (1823),  
drawn by surveyor  
Major James Taylor and  
engraved by Robert  
Havell and Son,  
London.  
The University of  
Melbourne Art Collection,  
Gift of the Sir Russell and  
Mab Grimwade Bequest,  
1973

propaganda to show the development of Sydney as a civilised place. The first panel shows the developing city from a hilltop view looking into an orderly backyard; everything is very civilised, ladies and gentlemen wandering around having polite philosophical discussions. The second scene tails off and it starts to get a bit more rugged; not wilderness but cultivated fields and there are some curious Aboriginal figures wearing togas who were the kind of nice polite natives. Then the third one is the descent into barbarism; Aboriginal people living in their mia mias, hunting; convicts skulking, skiving off, playing cards. The point of the panorama is to offset the former wilderness savagery with this new polite civilisation. So as an allegory it's pretty obvious, but interesting also in that sense of how people are seeing their own place develop and also how they're trying to project it.

We see a very similar message in the book *Views of Australia* (1824–25) by Joseph Lycett and in the Dale panorama of King Georges Sound (1834), although everyone looks at Dale's panorama and the most striking thing seems to be the friendliness of the Aboriginal figures. You've got this apparently friendly scene with Dale and his hunting party shaking hands with the Noongar locals. The key to that is perhaps to be read in light of the text that accompanies the panorama where Dale writes at length about hunting Yagan and then of the slain Noongar warrior's head being taken back to England. At that time, when all the reports back in England were of savage blacks and people being massacred, Dale's panorama is set out to say 'Hey, actually King George Sound's a good place, the locals are very friendly'. All those early works have that propaganda element.

In the field of Indigenous studies, relationships

Panoramic View of King  
Georges Sound, part  
of the Colony of Swan  
River (1834), drawn  
by Robert Dale and  
engraved by Robert  
Havell Jnr, London: this  
image was reproduced  
at large scale in  
*Australian Garden  
History*, 23 (1), 2011,  
pp.9–14.

The University of  
Melbourne Art Collection,  
Gift of the Sir Russell and  
Mab Grimwade Bequest,  
1973.

are never simple, never straightforward, and the Dale one is a classic example. Yagan was outlawed for several years before he was hunted down and during that time he was in the employ of the colonial government. So he was an outlaw receiving payment from the government, outlawed for a series of political reasons and finally hunted down for a series of political reasons, not entirely reflective of the nature of the relationship. There was a complex political relationship between people like Yagan and some of his fellow Noongar, really sophisticated political movers—colonialism didn't just happen to them; they remained active agents in the cross-cultural exchanges that were going on. They were quite skillfully maneuvering better positions for their people but in the end it didn't really work out that well. The initial encounters were often couched in terms of mutual co-operation, as the two parties tried to negotiate across cultures, such as that drawn out by Kim Scott in his recent book *That Deadman Dance*, and then it descends.

That challenge to make colonial works and attitudes relevant to contemporary audiences was fascinating. In fact it wasn't as hard as everyone thought it would be because the moment I started I found an incredible amount of interest. There's that expectation that you put on a colonial show and you get that over-fifties, over-sixties market, and that's true. But at present there's also a huge amount of interest amongst young people. The first thing that struck me was that there are young bands drawing on colonial themes. So we sent out the word that I was doing this show and all of a sudden dozens of bands were coming in, bands like Buried Horses—who I think have an average age of around 23—writing this stuff that's deeply steeped in the colonial legacy, building on



the success of bands like The Drones, who, over the last five years, have been really pioneering a return to colonial themes in their music.

So I think there's a huge amount of interest in it, possibly coupled with the fact that back in the 'nineties and early part of the present century there was a certain reluctance to deal with colonial historical themes, triggered by debates between black-arm-band history and Windschuttleian revisionism. I think a lot of people felt really frightened to deal with the material and I think that we're possibly entering into a phase where people are finally feeling more comfortable with it—possibly after the apology—and possibly a tiny bit more resolved so that they can start looking at works from this period and explore them without seeming to be at one extreme or the other. I think that's probably why a lot of young people and bands are realising that it's an area in which they can engage. So for me, I thought it was really important to bring those musicians into the

continuity. There's one school of thinking with colonial material that you need to throw people into that time period—I'm not interested in that because I think it's always going to be a simulation. I'm interested in throwing people in, in a way that they recognise that the older material is still incredibly present; the way that we saw the landscape then is not that different from now, there are so many continuities. From the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries to the present, there are parallels in every respect—leaps forward in science; changes in the ways that people are feeling. People talked then about feeling connected to each other in ways that they had never conceived of before, the same thing we talk about today with the internet. I think that on the one hand we learn that we've moved forward and changed but on the other hand the great flaw you can have when looking at colonial material is assuming that we're smarter or less racist or better informed. The bedrock of what was happening then is still shaping what we're doing now. I guess the crux of



The Experimental Gentlemen exhibition installed within The Ian Potter Museum of Art at The University of Melbourne, 2011.

conversation. We did that with a series of podcasts.

Our podcasts had a two-fold purpose—firstly to provide a soundtrack to the exhibition, with these songs that deal with the material, but secondly we invited those musicians to come in to talk about their song that's on the soundtrack and explore some of those ideas about relevance of the historical narrative, about the importance of covering Australian themes in music. Some of them brought the landscape to their songwriting, so we had those in the exhibition as listening stations. Whilst we invited a lot of young bands in, we also invited old stalwarts like Kev Carmody, Don Walker from Cold Chisel, Mick Thomas from Weddings, Parties, Anything. I think it was really important to suggest that there's a continuity to what these people are doing and that there's a continuity to the art—a continuity to the bigger picture. It was also to say 'Hey, wait on a tick, these old works have this presence' and when you have someone talking in your ear it's an amazing way to give a kind of realness, a contemporary presence to the work.

The real crux of the engagement between a young audience, the colonial works, and the soundtrack is

the engagement is for people to recognise the ways in which their own vision is shaped by this long line of constructions from the past.

I'm not a garden historian but I'm very interested in aspects of garden history. At a very basic level the history of the garden is the history of the ways in which we see, the ways we see our desire for the shape of the landscape. The development of gardens is totally relationship based—our relationship to how we want to shape or not shape the landscape—and I think that's exactly the same thing we see in art. The garden painting, the landscape painting, is about how we are choosing to shape our vision of the landscape. And I think that interrogating the underlying meanings of that are probably the most pressing questions for understanding the ways in which we want to shape our society.

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Henry Skerritt curated Experimental Gentleman as the Grimwade Intern of The Ian Potter Museum of Art at The University of Melbourne. He is currently undertaking doctoral studies in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh.

# *Art, science, and the botanical image*

In art in this country, landscape remains the great Australian subject. With all our national hand-wringing over identity so closely tied to our relationship to the environment, it is a subject both vexing and unavoidable. Landscape has often functioned as the proving ground for ideas exploring the relationship of the natural environment to our national identity, from the biological fascinations of the nineteenth century to the psychological pre-occupations of the twenty-first. It is a truth so unfashionable, familiar, and problematic as to be rendered banal. However it remains one of the chief cultural means by which we have come to understand who we are: and, through imaging, as a means of understanding where we are.

Dominic Redfern

was also a natural history artist by training. His father, William Lewin, had produced *The Birds of Great Britain* (London, 1789–94, second edition, 1795–1801), and both his sons, John and brother Thomas, trained and worked in the family business producing plates. Alongside Lewin's arrival was that of Matthew Flinders who had brought with him the gifted Ferdinand Bauer, arguably one of the greatest botanical artists. Bauer accompanied Flinders on his circumnavigation of Australia and produced an exquisite and extensive folio of illustrations. He was quickly forgotten in his own time but thankfully his memory has been revived and credit is now given where it was due.



In the process of depicting environments, the status, currency, and possibility of beauty in art as well as the idea of the 'natural' as a cultural construction have become recent foci for my work.

Botanical illustration is an important part of that narrative. During the first twenty years of our colonial history we did not have any professional artists. Rather we had a number of amateurs who captured something of the early social and civic life of the colony, as well as scientists and ships' officers who included illustration amongst their skills and duties. Notable amongst these was the so-called Port Jackson Painter, representing one or more persons commonly believed to be ships' officers, who moved beyond prosaic illustration in their depictions of eighteenth-century colonial life but also generated the largest single visual record of the flora and fauna of the colony in that period. The other important First Fleet artists were George Raper, a ships' officer who also executed a large number of landscape, flora, and fauna studies, and Thomas Watling, a convicted forger who won his pardon through the good graces of Governor John Hunter, a keen amateur artist himself. Our first professional artist, John Lewin, arrived in 1800 and

Lewin and Bauer arrived at the beginning of a century that saw Australia move steadily from colony towards nationhood and in which botanical illustration became increasingly popular. It is worthy of note that botanical illustration emerged as a profession in spite of two developments: photography was invented; and botanical nomenclature was fully established to provide a means of description that reduced the need for illustration. Nonetheless as the modern scientific era evolved, botanical illustration, the last vestige of the period when art and science were joined together in their attempt to describe and record the natural world, became entrenched in our visual culture.

The fact of botanical illustration's popularity and the emergence of an Australian identity may not seem intrinsically linked but I would contend they are. Our history begins in the modern era, a secular age in which rationality was championed

as a guiding value in society. Tied as it was to science—with its emerging Linnaean principles of identification—a rational, objective, and accurate engagement with, and record of, the natural world became a passion that peaked in the Victorian era. Our emerging identity then was tied to the very peculiar and singular natural environment in which the colonists found themselves. They expressed their engagement with it by attempting to image it as scientists and artists: it is in botanical illustration that these divergent disciplines met.

Consider as a small example of the relationship between our identity and our vision, the concern we have for which artist was first to accurately depict our eucalypts in all their hazy transparent beauty. As John Glover, a dedicated and by turns celebrated and derided Tasmanian artist of the first half of the nineteenth century, noted in the catalogue of his 1835 exhibition, ‘there is a remarkable peculiarity in the Trees

Understanding identity and understanding place are intrinsically linked as a means to engage critically with what the philosopher Heidegger described as the ‘homelessness’ of the modern condition. Closely attending to the specifics of our environment can help us address the ‘undifferentiation’ of place that the collapse of time, space, and culture bring. In contrast to the rhetoric and reality of global ‘non-spaces’, our present moment has brought challenges that warrant a re-inflating of time and space to recognise and re-particularise the local. Clearly seeing and describing does not necessarily eschew post-modern approaches to landscape that construct it as a socio-historical nexus of different narratives, but it does, at some level, return to the source, to the specifics of a given place, and that which we find there.

Botanical illustration requires just such a deep ‘attending’. It remains a vitally important means of description, and arguably still surpasses

**From left to right:**  
Pigface and rabbit skull from Loddon, 2008;  
Tissue and lichen from Muotkatunturi/  
Sallivaara, 2009; *Callitris verrucosa* foliage from  
Pining, 2011; *Callitris verrucosa* nut from  
Pining, 2011; and *Triodia* from Saltbush, 2008.

Video stills: Dominic Redfern



of this Country; however numerous they rarely prevent you tracing through them the whole distant country’. He was followed by Eugene von Guérard, who had a similarly romantic European style but nonetheless applied himself to capturing the unique qualities of the environment, a fact that is evident in his scientific approach to detail. It was Buvelot, the Swiss émigré, however, who was later acclaimed to have come closest to capturing an objectively truthful rendering of the atmosphere and environment of the Australian landscape. It was Buvelot who the Heidelberg artists believed provided some kind of useful model for capturing the unique Australian light. And in the popular and reductive narrative of the European encounter with the antipodean environment it is Buvelot who was widely acclaimed as having ‘discovered’ the gum tree, by which is meant he was able to find, and convey, its beauty.

photography as a means of describing plants. This is a result of illustration’s ability to combine accuracy with the ideal—botanical illustrations often being generated from a number of specimens. They also provide the capacity to combine a variety of scales with the ability to collapse anterior and posterior, interior and exterior views into a single cohesive—and aesthetically seductive—image. In botanical illustration we can still find art and science expressing their joint concern with the accurate description of our experience of the world as an endeavour in which prose and poetry, truth and beauty are not mutually exclusive.

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**Dr Dominic Redfern** is a video artist whose work is focused upon narratives of place and subsequently upon the discourse of natural history. He is the current chair of WestSpace Gallery and he works as a senior lecturer and studio coordinator in Media Arts at the School of Art, RMIT University.



Dimitri Serghis

## *'To create beauty': Robert Boyle and the Australian landscape*

Rocks and water:  
Boyle's design for the  
Australian garden  
at Burnley, with  
careful placement of  
basalt boulders.

Robert Boyle continues to evolve his own distinctive Australian style drawing on the legacy of the pioneers of a natural design ethos in Australian landscaping.

Each year at the Burnley School of Horticulture—since 1997, a part of The University of Melbourne—students undertake a rite of passage, joining their lecturers for a series of ‘plant walks’ in the heritage-listed campus gardens. These walks familiarise students with the garden’s rich collection of mostly labelled plants, which has been developed for teaching and learning for over a century (from 1891).

In the southwestern corner of the Burnley campus is an area dedicated to Australian plants. Running through this area are three interconnected pools crafted from large basalt boulders and linked by a

gently running waterway. Landscape designer and former Burnley graduate, Robert Boyle, created this water feature in the Burnley Australian plant garden.

Taking their first plant walk in this part of the garden, it is likely many students would be unaware of the close connections between the physical place they experience and the pioneers of a natural style of Australian landscaping. Boyle was inspired by those pioneers—people such as Edna Walling (1895–1973), Ellis Stones (1895–1975), Alistair Knox (1912–1986), and Gordon Ford (1918–1999)—who, from around the mid-twentieth century, were among the first to show an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of the Australian landscape. Their work emphasised natural materials, Australian plants, light, and form. Boyle worked with Knox and Ford, learning from them and later adapting their

philosophies to create his own vision of the natural landscape in his landscape design practice. The aesthetic qualities of the Australian landscape were to become the dominant influence on Boyle's work.

## Early influences

Soon after graduating from Burnley in 1970, Boyle met environmental designer Alistair Knox, who was building mud brick houses in the Eltham district, then a semi-rural community in Melbourne's outer north-east. As described by Knox, the mud-brick buildings sat 'effortlessly within the confines of the Australian bush'. From the 1930s, Eltham had grown as a community with its own style, philosophy, and identity, attracting artists, musicians, architects, builders, and landscape designers. The young Robert Boyle was also drawn to Eltham. Boyle was involved in a church youth group that organised trips to Kangaroo Ground to make mud bricks, and this is how he first came to meet Alistair Knox. Knox took the young Boyle under his wing, becoming his mentor and great friend, and introducing Boyle to Gordon Ford, to artist, conservationist, and landscape architect Peter Glass (1917–1997), and to a host of other like-minded people.

Another early influence for Boyle was Edna Walling's book *A Gardener's Log* (1948; reissued 1969). Her gradual embrace of the Australian bush had opened his eyes to the possibilities of designing with native plants. Boyle's grandparents had given him a copy of Walling's book while he was still studying. English-born Walling had moved to Australia in her teens, was educated at Burnley, and became one of Australia's foremost landscape designers and authors. By the early 1950s, Walling had almost completely rejected exotic plants in favor of natives in her garden designs.

Into the equation came Wodonga carpenter Ellis Stones, who, after being encouraged into landscaping by Walling, became Australia's foremost designer of rock work, early on in partnership with Walling. An early proponent of native plants, Stones generally considered exotic plants placed beside rocks unsatisfactory, preferring instead species that grew naturally around the rocks. Stones became a master of placing rock, and Boyle learned much from his use of mass and voids.

In 1971, Boyle received a lucky break when prolific garden writer and horticulturist Olive Mellor approached him to become landscape consultant for *Australian Home Beautiful*, filling the role she had undertaken from 1934 to 1970.

The 1970s in Australia were dominated by a sense of discovery of native flora led by educator and environmentalist Thistle Harris. Enthusiasm for Australian plants was not always matched with adequate plant choice and design, however, and native gardens developed a popular reputation for being dry, dusty, and unrewarding horticulture. This did not faze Boyle who, as the magazine's resident landscape consultant, offered readers site unseen a comprehensive garden design service with a clear emphasis on native plants. This series of articles and designs spanned 15 years and enabled Boyle to establish himself as a prominent voice in garden design.

Knox remained the prevailing influence on Boyle's work. For many years, Boyle worked with Knox as preferred landscaper, forging a great friendship that left a deep impression on both men. Writing in *Landscape Australia* after the architect's death in 1986, Boyle recalled how Knox opened his eyes 'to the qualities of the Australian landscape' and 'helped us to see value and beauty in reclaimed materials and earth buildings'. This theme of valuing beauty later became one of Boyle's guiding principles. Robert commented to me in 2010 that the role of a landscape designer is to create beauty; to find a balance in the continuing tension between the urban and natural environment: 'We live in the cities and, as landscape designers, let's make them beautiful, that's our job, to create beauty'.

Robert Boyle in his studio at Eltham.



## Works and achievements

The influence of Eltham permeated much of Boyle's work including his 1989 design for Burnley College's water feature, which complemented the native garden planted by Kath Deery in the mid 1980s. Boyle's rock work was characterised by an informality aimed at simulating a bush setting and was labeled by prominent English horticulturist James Hitchmough as a good example of the 'Eltham rock and water style'.

The large, basalt rocks are painstakingly placed, giving the impression they are part of the original landscape, with the garden crafted around them. This design, along with a series of major commercial works, consolidated Boyle's reputation as a master of the natural style in the tradition of Ellis Stones and Gordon Ford.

The natural style is echoed in several of Boyle's major commercial designs, including innovative native plantings at the Reserve Bank of Australia's Note Printing Works at Craigieburn featuring massive boulders and low-growing rock plants, Brown Brothers' Milawa Winery with its man-made lake surrounded by lemon-scented gums, and the Preston Institute of Technology campus at Bundoora (now RMIT University) with its avenue of spotted gums. This style is also prominent in Boyle's public works including the former City of Nunawading Town Hall (now City of Whitehorse), the heritage-listed Schwerkoldt Cottage and sections of Yarran Dheran bushland park in Mitcham. (The major part of Yarran Dheran was created by Paul Thompson from 1973.)

*The natural style is echoed in several of Boyle's major commercial designs featuring massive boulders and low-growing rock plants*

According to John Patrick, Boyle pioneered—along with fellow Burnley graduate Rick Eckersley—a more contemporary approach to design. Grounded in the natural Australian style, this approach is not limited to a particular group of plants, or particular materials—it is about crafting designs based on a clear interpretation of the site and an honest appraisal of the wishes of the client.

The Templestowe garden designed and built by Boyle in 1981 is a good example of this approach, using predominantly native plants alongside some classic exotic species. Originally a citrus orchard,



the front garden had been an Ellis Stones design. The owners' primary concern was to retain three mature river red gums and give priority to native plants in a large, rear garden which was to include a patio entertaining area, swimming pool and tennis court.

Using only one drawing, Boyle's design seamlessly incorporated the mature gum trees, creating a salt water swimming pool with large boulders at the water's edge linking it to the garden on one side. Native trees (eucalypts, hakeas, acacias) and shrubs (correas, grevilleas, melaleucas, thryptomenes, and westringias) were selected alongside well-placed exotics including rhododendrons and azaleas connecting the paved areas, lawn, a 'hidden' vegetable garden, and the tennis court. According to Ruth Sanderson in *Landscape Australia* (1986), the result was a 'private haven for the family' which 'exactly satisfies their brief, delights them and has proved to be the centre of their family life'.

## Current trends

In 2001 Boyle built a nursery, design workshop, and café business in Eltham on three-and-a-half acres of former horse paddocks overlooking Diamond Creek. He cleared the land and created new gardens blending native and exotic plants in a Mediterranean-inspired showpiece. Since then, his design practice has more than tripled in size. One of Boyle's recent projects was to redesign a section of Eltham Cemetery. The design features a series of trademark basalt boulders to create natural-looking outcrops for new ashes memorials surrounding a bronze sculpture, which was crafted by his friend Matcham Skipper, one of the original protagonists



This section of the garden at Boyle's practice in Eltham and the Johnson garden (opposite) show Boyle's open-minded approach and diverse use of Australian plants.  
Photos: Robert Boyle

of Monsalvat (who died in February 2011). Boyle believes the current trend in design is a swing back to a more natural, informal style. He says this trend is being driven in part by local councils who have mandated the use of indigenous flora in open spaces. Boyle still loves bush gardens but remains open-minded in his approach, as evidenced by an autumnal garden he is developing inspired by a visit to Denver Botanical Gardens that will feature drifts of miscanthus, calamagrostis, and sedums underneath a deciduous canopy of aspens, cotinus, and maples in a further evolution of his style.

## Conclusion

Robert Boyle accepted the baton passed by some of Australia's great natural landscape designers and builders, helping to create a new way of interpreting the modern Australian landscape using rock and water. He promoted the use of natural materials and native plants through his series of articles and designs in *Australian Home Beautiful*, establishing a strong voice in and link to Australia's gardening writing tradition. He has worked with and mentored a generation of landscape designers and builders in a continuing quest to create beauty in the landscape. Boyle continues to create significant public and private landscapes that offer new interpretations of his own distinctive Australian style.

**Dimitri Serghis** recently established his own horticulture business after completing a degree in horticulture at The University of Melbourne, Burnley campus. Previously, he has worked as a journalist, political advisor, and speech writer.

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This article is an edited version of an essay entitled 'Creating beauty: Robert Boyle and the Australian landscape', which was awarded the Nina Crone Student Award for Australian Garden History Writing in 2010.

# Divercity

Yan Zhao &  
Akihito Hatayama



2010, April, 17:00. View of creek in recreational area from Native Forest. Boardwalks with canoeing facility were built as a result of a competition, which received many submissions.



2015, November, 09:00. View of creek reserve from Edible Jungle. Transformation of the land to Edible Jungle commenced as residents began to move in.

As the early decades of the twenty-first century unfold, we asked two recent graduates of landscape architecture to share their vision for the future of local gardens and the community.

**Yan Zhao** is a landscape architect at Urban Initiatives, Melbourne. **Akihito Hatayama** is a landscape architect at Tract Consultants, also in Melbourne. Both Yan and Akihito are graduates of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at The University of Melbourne.



2020, February, 09:00. View of the plaza from Native Forest. The rain from the previous day fills the retention pond, but it is not enough to prevent saltwater pushing in.



2025, January, 19:00. View of Edible Jungle overlooking the City. The food jungle is well-established and will regenerate, feeding the residents.



Jessica Hood

## The photographic garden

Above: Tiptree Cottage around 1890, with owner Jane Elisa Savill and granddaughter Ellen Jane Galletly, shows the well-established garden between the cottage and the surrounding farmland. The flower garden was an impressive achievement rarely seen in other farmhouses of the day on the Canterbury Plains.

Right: Tiptree Cottage before the Canterbury earthquakes began in late 2010. Recently the contents of Tiptree have been put into storage and the building itself braced on either side for stability, awaiting the settling of the now earthquake-prone land.



Guided by archival and contemporary images we journey through influences on artistic practice that seek to locate and define the relationship between photography and the garden.

### Forage and dig

My interest in gardens arose through my fascination with the photograph, in particular the largely anonymous found photographs which I have collected over many years, mostly from flea markets. Initially my collection grew based on what caught my eye—a particular arrangement of subjects, the glance of an eye, or an awareness of the photographic apparatus appearing in the image itself. For me these images were like cuttings of the past, forgotten by their original owners, reappearing to remind me of photography as an analogue process, seemingly far distant from its digital successors. The more I collected, the more I realised that again and again my selections unconsciously highlighted the human figure photographed in a garden setting. The circumstance of photography in the garden surely arose in early amateur portrait practice due to the necessity for sufficient lighting—

few amateur photographs were taken inside, it was just too dark. The garden, as a private and familiar place, clearly presented the photographer with suitable backgrounds, easily accessible as extensions of the home.

*The more I collected, the more  
I realised that my selections  
unconsciously highlighted the  
human figure photographed  
in a garden setting*

The more I searched, the more substantial my collection of ‘found photographs’ became—now including children on chairs, studio portraits that simulated gardens, picnics, portraits with a shrubby backgrounds, weddings, houses, graveyards, statues. This has led me recently to consider why this garden scenography was so common and, further, to an analysis of photography’s relationship with the garden.

### **Generation of coexistences**

Born and raised in Christchurch, New Zealand, I spent a lot of my childhood with my mother’s family at Tiptree Cottage, a cob cottage on farmland bought by my great grandparents and lovingly restored by them and succeeding generations. William and Jane Savill, small farmers who immigrated to Christchurch from Essex, England, built Tiptree in 1861, and the Savill family continued to live there until 1926. It was in a largely deteriorated state when bought by my family in 1963, due to being used as a shearing and hay storage shed. The second Sunday of the month was spent at Tiptree, when it was opened to the public, and whether we had visitors or not, time was spent tending to the house and working in the garden. The land on which the cottage sits has over time been reduced, but it still looks onto the farmland of which it once was part.

*The time I spent at Tiptree  
in my youth is reflected today in my  
interest in sites of cultural heritage*

The small cottage garden that now surrounds Tiptree holds many memories for me. It was here that I learnt about settler life in the early colony of Christchurch and of the importance of protecting this history for the future. I spent a lot of time as a teenager contributing in my own way to preserving this place, refining my photography skills through projects centred on Tiptree. The time I spent at Tiptree in my youth is reflected today in my interest in sites of cultural heritage.



Bought at an antique store in Nelson, New Zealand, this undated photograph, from Whalley & Co. of Palmerston North, is a beautiful example of the garden in its simplest form as a location for early portraiture.



This snapshot was purchased for one dollar at Melbourne’s Camberwell Market in 2010. Written on back of photograph is ‘Chinese Pagoda, Kew Gardens, London, Mr & Mrs Cumberland’. I particularly enjoy this image for its rigid composition coupled with the brief glance back of a passing woman that seems to break the stilled moment in time.



Catch You on the Flipside, my recent installation at Melbourne's historic Abbotsford Convent.

Here a camera obscura suggests linkages between the enclosure of the garden and that of the camera.

## Enclosure

When my collection began to suggest to me that there might be a fruitful link between photography and the garden, I determined to investigate this further. I continue to be interested in the fact that the word 'garden' traces its etymological origins to the Old English word *geard* meaning fence or enclosed space. To enclose something is to surround it or close it on all sides, to fence in and seclude something from the outside: an outside that must therefore contain an inside. To enclose also makes reference to placing something in an envelope, accompanying a letter. Therefore enclosure has inscribed within it the quality of inside and outside, sending and exchange, suggesting a passage to and from a place that could be considered a journey. The journey of sending and exchange suggests correspondences between the multiple locations so essential in the early establishment of botanic gardens in Australia. It can also refer to photography, as an image has so often been included in exchanges between friends and family whether by letter or e-mail. A camera also operates within a concept of enclosure by its control of light through the closed darkened space of the apparatus allowing an image to appear and be recorded on a light-sensitive surface, or to be encoded into a digital language.

## Capture

A recent project of mine, titled *Catch You on the Flipside*, in the foyer space at c3 gallery at Melbourne's Abbotsford Convent, brought together the enclosure essential in defining the garden with the enclosure that constitutes a camera. The work was positioned in a foyer space of the gallery looking directly onto a significant

part of the garden (dating from c. 1902). Using the available architecture and its relation to the garden, the work consisted of three interrelated parts. The central element, from which the other two parts revolved, was a camera obscura set up in a window alcove. (A camera obscura is an optical device consisting of a darkened space lit by a small hole through which an image of the surrounding scene is reproduced on the opposite side, upside down, but accurate in colour and perspective.) An enclosure was created on the eternal alcove of the window, with a simple lens to focus the image, and a piece of sandblasted glass on the other side to capture the image. This transformed the window from a framed view of the garden to an image of the garden produced through the camera; an image that conformed to the ongoing passage of time and capturing the effect, for instance, of wind in the garden and the movement of people outside.

The second part of this installation was a 35mm-slide projection that recorded the passage of one complete day through the obscura window (twenty-four hours prior to its installation). A photograph was taken once every 5 minutes 12 seconds, equating to 81 slides over the opening hours of the gallery (10am to 5pm). During the show, each image was projected for 5 minutes 12 seconds, providing a recorded view of the garden, which correlated the time of viewing to the previous time of recording. The work aimed to arouse in the viewer an awareness of time in the viewing both of photography and of the garden. This experience came to completion in an event on the final day of the show when I invited visitors to have their photograph taken within the garden that formed the subject of the camera obscura. The image of the photography set-up

was visible in the obscura in the gallery. A total of 81 portraits were taken, in which each participant was sent, in the mail, a copy of the print in exchange for their participation.

### *I sought to highlight the direct relationship between the enclosure essential in defining the garden and that which constitutes the camera*

I sought in this work to highlight the direct relationship between the enclosure essential in defining the garden and that which constitutes the camera. I was interested in how the framing structure of the photographic enclosure produced a view of the garden that was conditioned not by a considered, moveable frame—such as through the camera's viewfinder—but by the chance positioning of the lens, based on the position of the building in relation to the garden. The fact that the camera obscura in this work, in being removed from precise decision making, revealed an image that composed and framed itself so successfully, exposed an inherent photographic-ness of the garden itself.

### **Travelling the distance**

During 2012 I am aiming to refine my perceptions of photography within the garden through a series of projects that will further explore the journeys, exchanges, and correspondences that contribute to the cultural and living collections of botanic gardens. I am currently engaged in research within the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, looking into the relationships of its collections to photography. I am especially interested in the charming papier-mâché apples and pears in the Museum of Economic Botany, acquired from Germany between 1866 and 1890 for the collection. Significantly for my research, the date of these models coincides with the rising availability and accessibility of photography. No longer simply representative of living collections, these models now archive varieties that no longer exist, and clearly belong to a period other than our own, underscored by the sense of wonder they evoke when it is revealed that they are models, not actual fruit.

I have also recently investigated the enclosure of the Palm House in the Adelaide Botanic Garden in a series of photographs that follow the journey of the sun across the surface of the building, during the opening hours (10am to 4pm). As photographs on 35mm-slide film, they will be

exhibited as a projection onto glass; one that will directly relate the sun as it transforms the internal environment of the glasshouse to replicate a climate other than its actual location in order for the plants inside to grow.

### **Future prospects**

My interest in gardens hence will follow this logic of the exchange or journey, when I visit the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew later in the year to further investigate photographic exchanges with Australian botanic gardens. I have also discovered an important and generally overlooked link in the relation between photography and gardens, which I hope this trip will further enlighten. William Henry Fox Talbot, one of photography's most significant pioneers, also contributed to the field of botany. In the 1830s he created a botanic garden at his home in Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, England. From this many plant specimens became subjects of his early photographic experiments. For me there is also the thrill that George Francis, as editor of the *Magazine of Science and School of Arts* (and well before he became the founding director of Adelaide Botanic Garden), was one of the first to promote photography and to link it to botany and gardens. Such links provide a rich context for my research.

Leading me down this garden path is an orientation of temporality within both the garden and photography. For me it becomes not only a question of the one single moment of the photographic image, but the movement of durations and journeys that constitute the structure of gardens themselves.



Gardens and landscapes when reproduced through photography are susceptible to a loss of the actual scale of things, and I find it interesting how various photographers deal with this. In this 35mm slide, a written text literally and conceptually frames Marg Corden as a figure through which we can imagine the height of the tall grass during wet season.

### **Further reading**

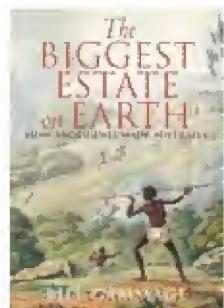
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**Jessica Hood** is a practicing artist living in Melbourne; she has a studio in the historic garden setting of the Abbotsford Convent and exhibits regularly. Preparation of this article has been facilitated by the editorial mentoring programme of the Nina Crone Fund.

# For the bookshelf



**Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: how Aborigines made Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2011 (ISBN 9781742377483): 384 pp, hardback, RRP: \$49.99**

'This book describes how the people of Australia managed their land in 1788. It tells how this was possible, what they did, and why. It argues that collectively they managed an Australian estate they thought of as single and universal.' [p.1] The formative idea behind Bill Gammage's important book—that Australia was one vast unified estate in 1788—is one of those big ideas that have the capacity to transform your life. Gammage deploys the word 'estate' strategically. It brings to mind carefully managed property, privately owned, expansive, and wealth creating. In landscape terms we might think of the Picturesque, of landscapes designed with careful placement of vegetation, water, and livestock to produce desired aesthetic effects, just as Australia was in 1788; managed, controlled, and shaped by its Aboriginal occupants.

*This beautiful estate so carefully managed was in no time at all despoiled*

The chief means of shaping the estate was fire and Aboriginal people used this tool to create the desired landscape arrangements or templates that would ensure a sustainable food supply, shepherd animals into predictable feeding patterns, create plenty, and a life rich in leisure. The strange thing, as Henry Reynolds notes in the Foreword to *The Biggest Estate*, is that Gammage's conclusions were not drawn a long time ago. The evidence was all there and the weight of it is staggering. Gammage quotes dozens of nineteenth-century descriptions of the land, many well-known, all of which testify to its English park-like appearance and the paintings he assembles similarly display Arcadian views, whether in Van Diemen's Land, Onkaparinga, or Swan River. Gammage draws the conclusion that Edward Curr drew in Victoria in 1883; 'it may perhaps be doubted whether any section of the human race has exercised a greater influence on the physical condition of any large portion of the globe than the wandering savages of Australia' [p.2]. This beautiful estate so carefully managed was in no time at all despoiled, pounded by millions of hooves so it became prone to drought and catastrophic bushfires. And in some parts of the country, like the Western District of Victoria, squatters spent years and fortunes establishing Picturesque gardens and estates based on British models over the ruins of the ancient estate

whose park-like beauty and productivity had lured them there in the first place.

Gammage shows us how to read the landscape; to recognise templates laid out generations, even centuries ago, and like an archaeologist how to interpret tree growth to find out where forests might once have existed, or not. On the way he creates problems for us: 'There was no wilderness. The Law—an ecological philosophy enforced by religious sanction—compelled people to care for all their country' [p.2]. If we can come to terms with these large and often disturbing ideas and try to 'learn the continent', which may mean unlearning much of what we now know, then one day, Gammage argues, 'we might become Australian' [p.232].

**Harriet Edquist**

Professor of Architectural History and Director of RMIT Design Archives, RMIT University

**Bruce Mackenzie, *Design with Landscape*, Bruce Mackenzie Design, Manly, NSW, 2011 (ISBN 9780646560151): 372 pp, hardback, RRP \$95 plus postage. Order online at [www.brucemackenzie.com.au](http://www.brucemackenzie.com.au)**

*Design with Landscape* by Bruce Mackenzie is a personal account of his long and illustrious landscape architectural career, which has spanned more than a half a century. By anyone's standard it represents an extraordinary body of work; but when one considers that Mackenzie, who turns 80 next year, has written, designed, and published the book himself, one cannot help but admire his unflagging energy, versatility, and careful attention to detail.

Mackenzie's early years were shaped by city living and weekend explorations in the bush. His career as a landscape designer was launched in the early 1960s when he became closely associated with a number of 'Sydney School' architects, modernists who sought to create buildings that responded to the particular light, forms, textures and colours of the Sydney landscape.



From 1969 to 1977 Mackenzie shared an office building at 7 Ridge Street, North Sydney with Bruce Rickard, Harry Howard, Ian McKay, Harry Seidler, David Moore, Gordon Andrews, Harry Williamson, and other leading designers of the day. It was a rich and lively environment where designers socialised and exchanged ideas on a daily basis. It was during these heady times

that the 'Sydney Bush School' of landscape architecture developed, with Mackenzie playing a leading role and Howard and Rickard in supporting roles, underpinned by Allan Correy, who headed the Landscape Section of the NSW Public Works Department. Mackenzie's first major work, Peacock Point, Balmain (or Illoura Reserve as it is known today) was opened in 1970. This project launched a movement that I have argued not only established the profession of landscape architecture in Sydney but paved the way for ecological design in Australia.

*Design with Landscape* opens with the chapter 'Spirit of the Land' which describes the landscape qualities of Australia (in general) and Sydney (in particular) that have inspired Mackenzie's design philosophy throughout his career. Several diagrammatic cross-sections through the Sydney Basin illustrate in clear, simple terms the ecological factors that shape the Sydney landscape.

Mackenzie then explores his most significant projects, beginning with the pioneering harbourside parks of Illoura Reserve, Balmain (1970), Clark Island (1972), and Yurulbin Reserve (previously Long Nose Point), Birchgrove (1975), and ending with the highly successful Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush Bay (2000), that is a work in progress today. In between there is a wide variety of projects, from large to small, including his own private gardens and the lesser known but highly ambitious Sir Joseph Banks Reserve, Botany Bay, a project close to Mackenzie's heart. The final chapter is biographical and reflective.

Mackenzie has always been an avid photographer but *Design with Landscape* is not just a marvellous photographic record. The juxtaposition of plans, sections, perspectives, diagrams, 'before and after' photos, and commentary allow the reader to understand Mackenzie's design process and philosophy at a much deeper level than is normally the case. Thus *Design with Landscape* is important in two ways—as a record of Australia's recent landscape architectural heritage, and as an exploration of the foundations of ecological landscape design in this country. The book will appeal to practising architects, planners, and landscape architects both in Australia and overseas, who seek to integrate built form with the local environment and who wish to create landscapes that are both sustainable and biodiverse. It will be a valuable teaching aid for

students who, until now, have not had access to a comprehensive study of Mackenzie's work.

The book will also appeal to those members of the general public who are passionate about design and the built environment. Many Sydneysiders, I am sure, will be surprised that many of the urban landscapes they inhabit are completely man-made. *Design with Landscape* makes the invisible work of landscape architects visible and that can only be good for the profession.

**Barbara Buchanan**

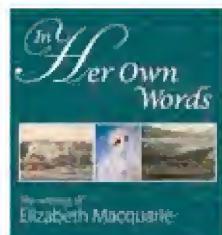
barbara.buchanan@biodesign.com.au

This review first appeared in the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter), *Architecture Bulletin*, January/February 2012.

**Robin Walsh (transcriber/editor), *In Her Own Words: the writings of Elizabeth Macquarie*, Exisle Publishing in collaboration with Macquarie University, Wollombi, NSW, 2011 (ISBN 9781921497988): 263 pp, hardback, RRP \$59.95**

What a delight after some 250 years to read Elizabeth's own words! Editor and author Robin Walsh is to be congratulated for giving 'voice' to this intriguing Scotswoman and once-governess. My interest was her eligibility for marriage by (*inter alia*) knowing 'how to lay out a country estate'—clearly she brought pattern books and opinions on landscape gardening to New South Wales. We benefit still from her dabbling—in the Sydney and Parramatta Domains and perhaps town parks in the Hawkesbury towns, for starters. The book contains letters, diary entries, commentary, and useful context. Walsh adds considerable detail to allow you to realise exactly what's going on around each excerpt. Much concerns politics, mores, empire, and posthumous restoration of the reputation of her husband (besmirched by the Bigge Enquiry into his alleged profligacy with the public purse on 'public projects'). Not so much concerns gardens and landscape design, but there are tantalising glimpses of her interest and involvement. There are some limited edition books remaining (of 199 copies) with embossed leather cover and colour slip case, each numbered and signed by Robin Walsh (retailing for \$150). Be fast.

**Stuart Read**  
Sydney-based landscape historian



Exisle Publishing will offer members a 10% discount. Order online at [www.exislepublishing.com.au](http://exislepublishing.com.au) using the code 'AGH' in the coupon area to get the discount. Or phone (02) 4998 3327.

# Recent releases

Richard Heathcote (ed.), *Carrick Hill: a portrait*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 2011 (ISBN 9781743050316): 160pp, hardback, RRP \$45

This evocatively illustrated house-and-garden portrait draws on a rich array of historic and current photographs to paint a detailed picture of a much-loved family property in Adelaide's foothills, now in public hands and enjoyed by garden lovers all year round. Whether it's the garden, the architecture (the house was built as a wedding present in the 1930s around eighteenth-century Staffordshire interior woodwork), the contents, or the social life of the Hayward family, *Carrick Hill: a portrait* will inspire and delight.

Robert Holden & Jane Brummitt, *More Than a Fairy Tale: May Gibbs, an artistic life*, Hardie Grant Books, Melbourne & London, (ISBN 9781742701509): 248pp, hardback, RRP \$49.95

Expert curator and passionate descendant combine to produce a sumptuous illustrated biography focusing on the transmogrified Australian flora that has made artist May Gibbs so celebrated. Many readers will be familiar with the booklets and cards of Gibbs, but as its title suggests, *More Than a Fairy Tale* goes well beyond this conventional veneer to reveal the family and working life of this consummate artist. One could hardly think of a more charming gift for the discerning booklover or aficionado of Australian children's literature.

E.B. Joyce & D.A. McCann (eds), *Burke and Wills: the scientific legacy of the Victorian Exploring Expedition*, CSIRO Publishing in association with the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, 2011 (ISBN 9780643103320): 368pp, hardback, RRP \$59.95

As the editors observe, this book is some century-and-a-half late, but better late than never. Challenging the common view that Burke and Wills generated only fiasco, expert contributors provide ample evidence that the expedition (and the various relief expeditions) did indeed contribute greatly to colonial science. Linden Gillbank analyses the botanical work of expedition botanist Hermann Beckler, artist Ludwig Becker, and Government Botanist Ferdinand Mueller, revealing a wealth of plant discoveries and a compelling artistic legacy. Other branches of science receive similar treatment in this extensively referenced and deftly illustrated volume, with the editors also adding a soundly based concluding analysis.

Gillian Lilleyman, *A Garden on The Margaret: the path to Old Bridge House*, The Author, [Claremont, WA], 2011 (ISBN 9780646553467): 140pp, hardback, available from the author for \$49.95 plus postage ([willeyman@bigpond.net.au](mailto:willeyman@bigpond.net.au)) or from selected bookshops

This beautifully jacketed and richly illustrated hardcover volume is much more than the story of the garden at Old Bridge House. Rather



*This Wondrous Land* (2011) showcases the National Gallery of Victoria's colonial landscape art—including Lycett's 'View on the Wingeecarrabee River' (1824)—with essays and commentary by twenty-five leading historians and curators.

# Garden Discoveries ...

Whether you are an avid horticulturist or simply love 'smelling the roses'.

it takes a panoramic and empathetic view of the garden's history by placing the location (in Western Australia's Margaret River region) and dynastic family ownerships in a wide geographical and social context. We learn of links to Wallcliffe House—now sadly destroyed by recent bushfires—and Lawnbrook; of the Brockmans and Bussells, Keenans and Loarings; and finally the Peirce family who have done so much to develop and tend the garden of Old Bridge House.

**Sarah Mirams, *Darebin Parklands: escaping the claws of the machine*, Melbourne Books, Melbourne, 2011 (ISBN 9781877096464): 173pp, paperback, RRP \$39.95 from [www.melbournebooks.com.au](http://www.melbournebooks.com.au)**

This is garden history so fresh you can still see the scars and feel the emotion. With strongly focused community activism and professional input from the likes of landscape designer Ellis Stones, the Darebin Parklands are barely three decades old, yet the area's chequered history—concisely traced in this beautifully produced volume—is a salutary and inspiration tale.

**Sue Shephard, *The Surprising Life of Constance Spry*, Macmillan, London, 2010 (ISBN 9780330544221): 368pp, hardback, RRP \$56.99**

Fascinating glimpse into the life of Britain's celebrated floral artist, whose demonstrations and books (from *Flower Decoration* in 1934 onwards) helped revolutionise floral art in the English-speaking world. Australia was not immune from Connie's charms and the book is worth the purchase price alone for the two or three pages devoted to her 1959 antipodean tour, which had matrons from north of the Harbour to south of the Yarra swooning.

**Ann Toy & Robert Griffin, *Government House Sydney, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Sydney, 2011 (ISBN 9781876991401)*: 240pp, hardback, RRP \$69.95**

This outstanding house and garden—holding a magnificent collection and retaining its integral role as state residence for New South Wales—is now subject of a suitably styled monograph, at once historical, descriptive, and analytical, rich in illustrations. Robert Griffin's chapter on the garden and grounds will perhaps be of most interest, but even a casual acquaintance with the remaining chapters yields a panorama of Australian architectural, social, and cultural history.

## Sri Lanka: Gardens in Paradise

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# Dialogue

## Digital newspapers on-line

The National Library of Australia continues to add new issues and titles to the remarkable on-line digital newspaper archive. Many of these additions cover regional and rural communities, and for those in areas fortunate enough to be covered this source should be the first port of call for any research query. Log on soon and check it out as this initiative has been a game changer in the field of Australian historical studies with garden history a major beneficiary.

[trove.nla.gov.au/](http://trove.nla.gov.au/)

## Donald Langmead (1939–2011)

We salute the life and career of Don Langmead, who passed away recently in Adelaide. Don was a passionate historian of the Australian environment and its architecture, especially town planning and international design influences, scholarship communicated through lectures and publications, such as his book *Accidental Architect* (1994), a biography of colonial South Australian surveyor George Strickland Kingston, and *The Adelaide City Plan* (1986) with Donald Leslie Johnson. He was also an internationally recognised scholar of modernism through bio-bibliographies/monographs on Willem Dudok, J.J.P. Oud, and Frank Lloyd Wright published in America by Greenwood Press. The core of Don Langmead's professional library is now held by the University of South Australia's Architecture Museum.

[www.unisa.edu.au/artarchitecturedesign/architecturemuseum](http://www.unisa.edu.au/artarchitecturedesign/architecturemuseum)

## Trust Trees iPhone app

As more and more applications for mobile phones come onto the market it was inevitable that garden history would soon feature.

Shelltox insect spray from the Gorgeous Gardens exhibition, at the Unley Museum, 80 Edmund Avenue, Unley, SA 5061, (08) 8372 5117



The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) has now released Trust Trees, an interactive application using Google maps that allows users to access information from the Trust's Significant Tree Register as well as to contribute information and images of favourite trees. The application is to be updated seasonally and is free to download.

[trust.trees@nattrust.com.au](mailto:trust.trees@nattrust.com.au)

## International scholarship

The latest issue of *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* features two Australian authors, Deakin University's David Jones and Luke Morgan from Monash. David profiles Albert Morris and his pioneering arid-zone revegetation project at Broken Hill, commenced in the 1930s, while Luke writes intriguingly on the grotesque, the gigantic, and the monstrous in Renaissance landscape design. Congratulations also to Luke Morgan for his recent ARC Discovery Projects grant for 2012, for his project 'The monster in the garden: reframing Renaissance landscape design'.

[www.tandf.co.uk/journals](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals)

## Gorgeous Gardens exhibition, Unley Museum

Although contained within a relative small space this dynamic and wide ranging exhibition is a delight for all who encounter it. Curated by Elizabeth Hartnell and opened in November 2011, it will run for two years and should not be missed. Voices of Unley's gardeners echo throughout the displays and resonate with most visitors' gardening experience and memories—from the preserving of fruit, lawn mowing, tools, fencing fashions, and plant importations to whimsical garden icons including gnomes and tyre swans. There are 'hands on' exhibits and the viewer can contribute on the *Garden Tips* wall with their personal antidotes.

Cas Middlemis

## Partnerships in garden history

In its latest newsletter (Summer 2011), our sister organisation the Garden History Society announces the results of its 'Working Together' feasibility study, aimed at strengthening ties between the GHS, the Association of Garden Trusts, the Parks and Gardens Database, and the London-based Garden Museum. This study contains far-reaching implications for the GHS and AGT in particular as they investigate ways of becoming a single strong voice for garden history and historic gardens in the UK. Closer links between the GHS and Garden Museum are also mooted. Stay tuned.

[www.gardenhistorysociety.org](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org)

## Australian Women's History Forum, March 2012

'Women with a plan: architects, town planners and landscape architects' is the theme for this year's Australian Women's History Month. The organisers—the Australian Women's History Forum—are aiming to bring those extraordinary women who have played important roles in shaping our urban environment and cultural landscapes into mainstream Australian history. An online gallery of 'Women with a Plan' will be launched during March, and ideas and new contributors to the Australian Women's History Forum and their 'Who's Who' feature are invited and welcomed.

[www.womenshistory.com.au/](http://www.womenshistory.com.au/)

## Community histories

At the recent Victorian Community History Awards 2011, an initiative of the Public Record Office Victoria and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, *The Victorian Bush: its 'original and natural' condition* by long-time forester Ron Hateley received the award for Best Print Publication (commercial). We were also delighted to learn that AGHS members Ann and Peter Synan received a Commendation in the same category for *Summer Walk: Sale Botanic Gardens & Lake Guttridge*, a fitting tribute to celebrate the Sale Botanic Garden's 150th birthday in 2010. *The Victorian Bush* is published by Polybractea Press, Melbourne (2010). *Summer Walk* is available through the Victorian State Government online bookshop.

[www.polybracteapress.com.au](http://www.polybracteapress.com.au)

[www.bookshop.vic.gov.au](http://www.bookshop.vic.gov.au)

*Olea excelsa* Ait. is a native of Madeira, whence it was introduced in 1784. It has stood out in Ireland, for several years, without any protection whatever, in the nursery of Mr. Robertson of Kilkenny, who thinks it will ultimately prove a valuable addition to our hardy evergreens. (See *Gard. Mag.*, vol. iii, p. 106.) In July, 1836, this tree measured 30 ft. in height, and the head 7 ft. in diameter. A second tree of the same species, Mr. Robertson informs us, has stood out equally well in an exposed situation ; and neither has ever received any protection whatever.

Remarks on  
*Olea excelsa* (now  
*Picconia excelsa*)  
from J.C. Loudon,  
*Arboretum et Fruticetum  
Britannicum* (London,  
1838), vol.2, p.1208

## *Picconia excelsa* in Australia

Further to a published email discussion about colonial plants—which commenced in AGH 16(4) and continued in AGH 16(5), 2005—Stuart Read resumes the conversation. This rainforest ('cloud' or 'laurel forest') tree is in the olive family (Oleaceae) endemic to the Canary Islands (recorded on five of the islands) and endangered in the wild due to timber clearance of that vegetation type and on the islands' northern cliffs. It is at best extremely rare in Australia. J.C. Loudon records it in *Hortus Britannicus* (1830) as introduced into the UK in 1784. It doesn't turn up in any of the Camden Park Nursery or any other NSW (early–mid 19th century) or Victorian (1855–89) nursery catalogues—perhaps reflecting difficulty in propagation rather than non-existence!? Loudon's *Arboretum* (1838) discusses specimens growing outside in shelter, one in Ireland. Perhaps this 'tenderness' worked against it? Camden Park Nursery and Garden volunteers Colin and Ewen Mills are propagating cuttings. The tree has fragrant white flowers in spring, olive-like fruits, and heavy, white timber. It has simple, entire leaves, opposite on the branch, dark green, glossy, and leathery. Bark is whitish-fawn and slightly warty/pimply on close inspection. An updated list of *Picconia excelsa* in Australia can be found at [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/journal](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/publications/journal)

## Helen Proudfoot (1930–2011)

As we go to press, we note briefly the passing of Helen Colleen (nee Baker) Proudfoot, town planner and historian. Helen Proudfoot was a long-time contributor to Australian history and heritage, especially in New South Wales. Her interests embraced the history of gardens and the designed landscape, and a list of her works in this field will be published in a later journal. Her forte was to see the big picture—a product of her town planning background—and many of her reports stand as the most authoritative work on their subject, as for instance her analysis of Sydney's Eastern Creek. She was a mentor and inspiration to a generation of landscape historians.

## National Restoration Fund for Historic Gardens



John Gowty and his assistant trimming the old cypress hedge, 1985.

Photo: Buda Historic House and Garden

Established in 2008, the AGHS National Restoration Fund for Historic Gardens is designed 'to provide assistance for Branches seeking to undertake conservation projects on historic gardens.' Funding committed by the respective State branches is then matched by the National Management Committee. In the financial year 2010–11 there were two successful applications—to restore the 1860s *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey cypress) hedge at Buda Historic Garden, in Castlemaine, Victoria, and to reconstruct the hakea bed at the Myall Park Botanic

Garden in Glen Morgan, Queensland. AGH is keenly following each of these projects as they unfold, and will feature more detail on each in forthcoming issues—the hakea bed at Myall Park Botanic Garden in 23(4), and the historic Buda hedge replanting in 24(1)—just after the autumn replanting works.

[www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

## Extending our reach

Have you got what it takes? The Australia Garden History Society is looking for members with skills and experience in marketing who could assist the National Management Committee.

If you can help, please contact the AGHS office by phone on (03) 9650 5043 or by email [info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

## The Botany Behind Gardens Forum

A full house attended The Botany Behind Gardens Forum, timed to coincide with the Society's Annual General Meeting in Melbourne in October. The forum was fascinating, with four diverse speakers highlighting several thought-provoking issues based on botany. These included Prof. Pauline Ladiges' clear exegesis on the interminable name changes that vex non-botanists—why should Australia's 900 or so species of *Acacia* change to *Racosperma* in deference to Africa's first-published wattles? [Well, because we're breaking the discipline's rule of primacy of publication, based on an

African 'type' (first-published specimen.)] More controversial name changes are looming: *Dryandra* merging with *Banksia*; *Melaleuca* with *Callistemon*; splitting *Dendrobium* orchids—stay tuned! With evocative slides in-situ and ex-situ (that is, in gardens remote from the plants' wild populations) David Cantrill explained conservation and ecological research being done by the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Particularly poignant was a re-introduction into the wild of a population of *Nematolepis wilsonii* (Rutaceae/citrus family) all but wiped out in the wild, thanks to raging wildfires—yet not. Creating and filling seed banks of wild species and studying natural ecosystems and the roles of plants in them may yield vital clues to our coping with climate change and surviving on earth.

John Dwyer eloquently teased out what are weeds and our wildly divergent attitudes to them—from single-issue hatred and worship of locally endemic to almost romantic nostalgia for plants of our childhood, grandparents, and state(s) of origin overseas. Also broached was our obsession with tidiness and order—whence comes this and what does it say about us and natural order? The selectivity and the language of weed-hating bears close scrutiny and reveals much. How might gardeners steer a middle-path and learn to love more-shaggy and less-pure visions of others? And Paul Fox passionately explored trophy hunters in the plant world, with botanic gardens as a kind of trophy chest—also their legacy, whether and how (should?) we deal with constant (curatorial/design/collecting/fashion) changes in our historic botanic gardens, such as Melbourne's? Have we something globally unique with the melded designs of people like William Guilfoyle—nursery proprietors constructing New World gardens, changing Old World designs to accommodate a torrent of New World plant discoveries; parading inventions of the industrial revolution via construction and maintenance; gardens speaking evocatively of their place and time. Are their heritage values well-enough understood or appreciated by those making sweeping (budgetary/resource/design) decisions? And are they accountable, and to whom?

Topping those stimuli was a relaxed tour around Melbourne University's diverse grounds, a hands-on view of a marvellous array of rare gardening books in the Baillieu Library, and tour of the System Garden amid the Botany

Department (including that garden's intriguing rocket-like octagonal heating tower of a former glasshouse), with the memory of Sophie Ducker and the very real and delightful Marion Brookes. I was intrigued to see a whopping tree of an osage orange (*Machlura pomifera*) which John Hawker pointed out flowers but does not fruit—perhaps the cultivar 'Texas'.

An extra day allowed a busload to enjoy the extensive sculpture garden of the McClelland Gallery at Langwarrin on the Mornington Peninsula, then lunch and a tour of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne's annexe at Cranbourne, in a former sand quarry redeveloped since 1994. This includes an extensive nature reserve with 10km of walking tracks and The Australian Garden—an exciting display of a huge range of Australian flora, grouped artistically and horticulturally rather than everything labelled botanically. It's chock full of ideas for gardeners—on balconies, in undercrofts (hanging mesh racks of native orchids); small or large scale, old or new.

We were guided by one of its inspirers and co-designers, Paul Thompson, who praised the client for the breadth of the design brief (calling for expressions of interest to design a garden 'for 100 years') and selection committee, for which Paul teamed up with designer Kevin Taylor (of landscape architects Taylor Cullity Lethlean). Paul's role was selecting plants—passing these through a rigid 'weediness potential model' first as the garden's setting is fragile. He considered (sadly, recently-deceased) Kevin Taylor as poet, team leader, and visionary. Cranbourne celebrates and explains Australia's nature and culture, but in a modern idiom—blending art and horticulture. Stages 1 & 2 (when completed) bring its plant count to approximately 3000 taxa (genera and species). This pales next to say the ANBG in Canberra's 6000 but that's not its point: inspiration is. Painter John Wolseley was involved in the design—a loosely interpreted map of Australia with a red centre, eucalypt garden, mallee, and shrub areas. Exciting are exhibition gardens with mock-up house frames, island beds, dwarf and unusual cultivated forms of plants, stripes of differing mulches side-by-side (including purple shells, various-coloured and textured earths and gravels, even spent grape trusses—got me thinking why don't we play more with the look of the earth?) as well as waterfalls, play structures for smaller people, and quirky sculptural installations. Ideas for using plants, doing things cleverly and with some style in our homes and offices—using native plants with verve—are its forte.



This included a sneak preview of the nine extra acres of stage 2, due to open in 2012. This includes hilltop viewing areas, a climber garden with grids of frames, a large community function area, education, café, and picnic areas. Thematic plantings feature water-saving and dry river bed plants, economic plants (eucalypt and tea tree oils, fragrances), groups of gums (bloodwoods, stringybarks, boxes, peppermints, and ironbarks), rainforest plants, desert or arid-zone plants—terrific to see this. The older areas are maturing fast, bringing challenges for horticulturists—designers sadly haven't written management guidance on look or maintenance tips for the gardeners. This seems something AGHS should push the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne to correct.

Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens annexe at Cranbourne, photographed in October 2011.  
Photo: Stuart Read

# Profile: Mike Evans

I completed my secondary education in the UK with botany and zoology as my principal areas of interest. In the 1950s there were ample places at university, and I did have places offered, but I chose instead to apply to the Civil Service's open competition for a job. Purely by chance, a member of my interview panel was from the Herbarium at Kew and since I knew at least about binomial nomenclature (*Bellis perennis* was the best that I could muster) I was offered the position of Assistant Experimental Officer at the Herbarium. Again by chance I was put into the Australasian section (Australasia, New Zealand, and Polynesia) under Dr Ronald Melville, and much of my time was spent in the cellars wading through historical collections dating back to the nineteenth century, which had never been sorted let alone named. There was also much traffic from the Pacific Islands at that time, particularly from Forestry Departments such as that in Fiji.

By 1964 my knowledge of plant families was quite well developed and amongst many visitors to Kew was Dr Ray Fosberg (from the Edinburgh Botanical Conference) who had a modest grant to prepare a Flora of Micronesia—he needed cheap labour and I was recruited. Having married another young recruit to the Public Service in 1962 (my wife Dorothy), just bought a tiny house, and discovered that we were expecting our first child we took off for Washington DC at the beginning of January 1965 on a two-year contract starting with six months at the Smithsonian. Dot had to return to the UK for the birth of number one and I proceeded on to Guam to spend the next year both there and traveling to as many islands in the Carolines, Marianas, Yap, and Palau as possible collecting. Generally I traveled on the copra ships (WWII, rusty tramps), to exotic locations such as Truk and Ifaluk Atolls still littered with wartime debris, no landing facilities (we'd often walk in from the edge of the reef), no accommodation, often no English spoken, and yet I was always welcomed, fed, and housed with great hospitality and accompanied on my collecting by bands of curious little boys. Since the funding for my job was from the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness and my ostensible role was the collection of ethnobotanical information relating to a spike of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis on Guam, wherever I went I gathered details of local recipes using endemic plants (cycads were particularly suspect). Between expeditions I joined Dot and the baby



Gerry lying on the white coral sand beaches of Guam watching the unending procession of B52 bombers on their way to Vietnam—it was the middle of the war.

Later in 1966, rather than return to the US we decided to return to the UK via the western route, with the idea of perhaps finding some land in Australia. Sailing into Sydney Harbour on a sunny Spring morning was a truly unforgettable experience. After two years away it was like returning home—my home town at birth was Bristol and it bears a remarkable resemblance to Sydney. Dr Hj Eichler, when Australian Liaison Officer at Kew, had given me the name of Ru Hoogland, Head of the CSIRO Land Research Herbarium, as a contact—on day one I called him and he said ‘come up to Canberra tomorrow, we have a job and will have a house ready for you’. For two years I lived the gentle life of a Technical Assistant in the herbarium until the need for money drove me into computers. From a Programmer in Training with the Federal Government in 1968, I spent seven years working for the Health Department until the bureaucracy got the better of me and I quit. With four little girls we headed for Victoria, joined a community (known locally as ‘the hippies in the hills’) while Dot pursued her educational qualifications, becoming the Education Officer at the Healesville Sanctuary while I farmed and built, running a contracting business and, eventually, taking over a small building company for ten years.

By 1989 the girls had all taken off and Dot found a job in Katherine, NT, as the Conservation Officer while I built and worked with Aboriginal communities on horticultural and interpretive-trail projects. Still following Dot, who became the NT Parks Manager, we moved to Darwin

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# Diary dates

## FEBRUARY 2012

**Friday 10**

On the couch with Richard Heathcote

NORTHERN NSW

Dinner with guest speaker Richard Heathcote, director of Carrick Hill historic house and garden, Adelaide—about his Churchill Fellowship to Canada and the UK studying interpretation on heritage sites. For further details email the Sub-Branch Chairman, Bill Oates, at [woates@une.edu.au](mailto:woates@une.edu.au) or Helen Nancarrow on [helennancarrow@bigpond.com](mailto:helennancarrow@bigpond.com)



**Wednesday 15**

Travellers' Tales, Madagascar

VICTORIA

Travellers Sue Keon-Cohen and Di Renou will share their recent adventures with an illustrated talk on the plants and landscape of Madagascar. 10am, Domain House, Dallas Brooks Drive, South Yarra. Cost: \$5 includes morning tea/coffee. Enquiries to [pdjellie@hotmail.com](mailto:pdjellie@hotmail.com) or phone (02) 9836 1881

**Friday 17**

Ramble in O'Connor and Lyneham

ACT/RIVERINA/MONARO

We will visit the O'Connor wetlands of David and Banksia Streets and perhaps the wetlands being developed in Lyneham. The evening will end with a visit to Lainie and David Shorthouse's garden in Lyneham, and of course refreshments. 5.30pm, David Street Wetlands. Cost: \$10 members, \$15 non-members including refreshments. Bookings essential via the booking slip in the Branch newsletter (December 2011: No 7) or email Nancy Clarke at [nclarke@grapevine.com.au](mailto:nclarke@grapevine.com.au)

**Wednesday 22**

Bidwill: a botanist cut short

SYDNEY & NORTHERN NSW

Stuart Read will speak about the career of John Carne Bidwill. 6.30pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: \$20 members, \$30 guests, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential. For bookings and enquiries contact Jeanne Villani (02) 9997 5995 or [Jeanne@Villani.com](mailto:Jeanne@Villani.com)

**Saturday 25**

Garden picnic, The Harp, Sutton Forest

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Summer afternoon garden picnic at The Harp, Sutton Forest. Members to provide picnic tea, and drinks will be provided by AGHS. 4–7.30pm, The Harp, Sutton Forest. Cost: \$20 members and friends. Enquiries to Lynette Esdaile (02) 4887 7122

## MARCH 2012

**Friday 2**

'The Garden of Ideas'

NORTHERN NSW

Talk by Richard Aitken profiling his book and the upcoming AGHS travelling exhibition 'The Garden of Ideas' in Sydney (July–November 2012). For further details email the Sub-Branch Chairman, Bill Oates, at [woates@une.edu.au](mailto:woates@une.edu.au) or Helen Nancarrow on [helennancarrow@bigpond.com](mailto:helennancarrow@bigpond.com)

**Sunday 18**

Marulan day

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Garden visit to historic Glenrock, walk around historic sites of Marulan. Lunch will be provided by the local Historical Society/CWA. Enquiries to Lynette Esdaile (02) 4887 7122

**Saturday 31–Sunday April 1**

Weekend trip to the Lower Hunter

SYDNEY & NORTHERN NSW

Over two days we will explore the Maitland/Woodville/Patterson area. Bookings essential. For bookings and enquiries contact Jeanne Villani (02) 9997 5995 or [Jeanne@Villani.com](mailto:Jeanne@Villani.com)

## APRIL 2012

**Monday 23–Friday 27**

Monaro and mountains

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Over five days, the tour will explore historic properties, buildings, and private gardens of the region and provide insight into historic and creative works these places and landscapes have inspired. The tour will be led by Trisha Burkitt, writer-photographer and long-time resident of the Monaro district.



## MAY 2012

Saturday 5

Working bee at Summerhome

TASMANIA

There will be a working bee in this significant historic garden followed by a barbecue lunch provided by the Committee. Enquiries to Wendy Ebsworth at [wendyebsworth@yahoo.com.au](mailto:wendyebsworth@yahoo.com.au)

## NOVEMBER 2012

Friday 9–Sunday 11

AGHS Annual National Conference, Ballarat, Victoria

VICTORIA

The Australian Garden History Society's 33rd Annual National Conference will be held in Ballarat in late Spring, 9–11 November 2012. (For more details see the article on Ballarat and the forthcoming conference on pages 35–36. The conference flyer will be included within the April/May/June 2012 issue of AGH.)

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and I became the Research Officer for the National Trust of Australia (NT) for the northern half of the Territory. This involved four years of fascinating research and recording including preparation of a series of 'gardens' to demonstrate changes and challenges in the Territory environment. Once again following Dot, we moved to Tasmania where she had been invited to plan the interpretation in the new Visitor Centre at Port Arthur Historic Site; this was in 1996, a tumultuous time on the Tasman Peninsula. Dot had gone on ahead to Tasmania, I stayed to wrap up work in Darwin and, as a final treat, I attended David Young's Conservation of Historic Buildings course at Canberra University. While Dot pursued her interpretation at Port Arthur, I restored an old farmhouse, became a guide at Port Arthur, then a Ghost Tour guide, consulted on building and administration work, bought and restored a real Convict Station (Australia's first railway station at Taranna), moved on to Bothwell, then Kempton, now Tunbridge—all earlier nineteenth-century houses.

My first contact with AGHS was the Sydney Conference in 2004 and I loved it; so many interesting connections.

Now Tasmania, and I'm enjoying what I see as a shift towards a wider view of garden history which incorporates the broader setting of gardens including the buildings within them, the forces at work in their development, necessity as well as beauty, and the human and natural landscapes in which they develop.

In Tasmania at the moment we are facing development threats to Lauderdale House and Ancanthe (Lady Franklin Museum) for which the Tasmanian Branch is advocating and supporting financially. Support for an early nineteenth-century house and garden in Hobart called Summerhome with working bees and some money will, we hope, give our Society access to a different, younger demographic. We are also supporting the Avenues of Honour project and exploring Tasmania's significant landscapes. Garden visits are popular but we are trying to widen the palette (mixed metaphor perhaps) with places such as MONA that we visited recently to view the indoor 'hanging' garden.

Images below, from left: the collecting party on Namonuito Atoll; then, back over the reef.

Photos: Mike Evans (Agfachrome slides, c.1965)





Lake Wendouree, Ballarat  
Photo: Ballarat Regional Tourism

## *'Gardens of a Golden Era': 2012 Ballarat conference*

The 33rd Annual National Conference of the Australian Garden History Society 'Gardens of a Golden Era' will be held from 9 to 11 November 2012 in Ballarat, a city which has done much to preserve its gold-rush past.

With the discovery of rich alluvial goldfields in 1851, thousands flocked to Victoria from around the world to seek their fortune. Ballarat uniquely saw three mining phases: surface alluvial workings, deep-lead mining, and quartz reef mining, which was sustained for over 50 years. Much of the resultant wealth was re-invested in the city. It produced an outstanding urban landscape with wide boulevards, grand Victorian architecture, historic precincts, public statuary, Lake Wendouree, and the Ballarat Botanical Gardens, one of the finest regional botanical gardens in Australia with many significant trees and buildings. Ballarat is said to have the greatest concentration of public statuary in any Australian city. Many of the buildings are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. The colourful history includes the Eureka Rebellion in 1854, often linked to the birth of democracy in Australia. The Eureka Flag is displayed at the Art Gallery of Ballarat.

In conjunction with the conference, a special exhibition *Capturing Flora – 300 years of Botanical Art* will be shown at the Art Gallery of Ballarat in Lydiard Street during October and November 2012. This will be the most ambitious exhibition of botanical art ever presented in Australia. The Gallery, the oldest and largest regional gallery in Australia, was opened by Alfred Deakin in 1890. It has a fine collection including works by S.T. Gill and other colonial works, paintings from the Heidelberg School, and contemporary works.

The heritage-listed Ballarat Botanical Gardens, extending over a 40-ha site, were gazetted in 1857 and developed from 1858, using plants supplied by Ferdinand Mueller from the Melbourne Botanic Gardens and Daniel Bunce from the Geelong Botanic Gardens. The Gardens retain typical characteristics of the nineteenth-century gardenesque style in the path layout, open lawn areas planted with specimen trees, formal avenues, and bedding displays. Significant buildings include the octagonal Statuary Pavilion (1887), built to house Benzoni's Flight from Pompeii and accompanying statues, the Adam Lindsay Gordon cottage, and the Robert Clark Conservatory and



View from Mount Buninyong, near Ballarat, Victoria  
Photo: Stephanie Patterson

Horticultural Centre (1995). The avenue of Prime Ministers' busts is well known. There are many rare and significant trees in the garden. The site is bounded by the man-made Lake Wendouree, which hosted 1956 Olympic Games rowing events. There is a pleasant 6km walk round the Lake, now full again after being dry for some years during the recent drought.

Sturt Street is a handsomely wide boulevard which runs through the centre of the city is adorned with fountains, statuary, mature trees, bandstands, and memorials, including the Titanic Memorial Bandstand. Notable buildings and churches are located in Sturt Street and Lydiard Street. A self-guided walk includes 59 of Ballarat's heritage buildings and monuments, and takes about 1 hour.

At the western end of Sturt Street, the Arch of Victory (1920) marks the beginning of the heritage-listed Avenue of Honour, one of the finest in Australia, with 3771 trees extending over 22 km on the Ballarat–Burumbeet Road. The Avenue is one of the earliest known (1917–19) and the longest example of this uniquely Australian form of memorial, and the precedent for some 90 other avenues in Victoria.

In conjunction with the conference there will be a photographic exhibition on Avenues of Honour by Sarah Wood at the historic Ballarat Mechanics Institute (1860–69) in Sturt Street. This will be an expanded version of the exhibition shown at the Shrine of Remembrance in 2010.

Ballarat is known for the award-winning open-air museum Sovereign Hill, a recreated 1850s gold mining settlement, built on a site which saw both alluvial and quartz mining. Each night it also stages an impressive sound and light show depicting the Eureka Rebellion, 'Blood on the Southern Cross'. Sovereign Hill is located only a short distance from the Conference venue.

With a population of nearly 100,000, Ballarat is just over 100 km from Melbourne. There is an hourly rail service and the trip by road takes about 1.5 hours. Well-preserved historic gold-mining towns such as Clunes, Buninyong, Smeaton, and Maldon are within an easy drive.

We look forward to welcoming you to Ballarat later in the year.



## Mission Statement

The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.